

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 18-184—sHB 5449

Education Committee

Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF CERTAIN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS AND THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES BY THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

SUMMARY: This act authorizes the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to use up to 2% of the amount appropriated for five of its programs to carry out innovative and results-driven service delivery pilots and other specified purposes. The act limits, to no more than 2%, the amount OEC can expend for these purposes from any single program's appropriation. The act prohibits the OEC commissioner from using any of the funds for administrative or other overhead costs.

The act also:

1. adds promoting the delivery of infant and toddler services to ensure optimal health, safety, and learning of children from birth to three years of age to OEC's existing list of responsibilities (§ 1);
2. gives the commissioner discretion in ranking groups under the Care 4 Kids program waiting list prioritization law (§ 3);
3. beginning in FY 20, removes the fixed \$8,927 per-child cost in the school readiness program and instead allows the OEC commissioner to set per child cost rates (§ 8); and
4. expands how the OEC commissioner can use unexpended school readiness funds (§ 9).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018

§§ 2-7 — DIVERSION OF PROGRAM FUNDS FOR PILOTS, EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

The act authorizes OEC to use up to 2% of the aggregated amount appropriated for five of its programs (listed below) to carry out purposes the act names. In the laws that authorize each of the five programs, the act adds the provision that OEC may not use more than 2% of the amount appropriated from any single program of the five.

OEC may use this money for innovative and results-driven service delivery pilots, program evaluation and improvement, performance-driven and results-accountable funding and procurement models, interagency coordination and collaboration, evaluative tools and infrastructure, and its other statutory duties. The act authorizes the commissioner to develop policies and procedures to implement these provisions.

The five programs are:

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1. Care 4 Kids, a child care subsidy program for low-income families (§ 3);
2. the school readiness program, a state-supported preschool program with an educational component (§ 4);
3. the quality enhancement grant program for child care centers and school readiness programs (§ 5);
4. Nurturing Families Network, which seeks to reduce infant abuse and neglect by assisting new parents through hospital-based assessment and home visitation follow-up (§ 6); and
5. the financial assistance program for neighborhood facilities, including day care centers (§ 7).

The act requires that if the total amount of the 2% exceeds \$1 million, all funds in excess of \$1 million must be used for service delivery. The act prohibits the OEC commissioner from using any of the funds for administrative or other overhead costs.

Reporting Requirement

The act requires OEC to report, by January 1 of each year, to the Education Committee on how it has expended the funds, including:

1. the results of any program evaluations,
2. an assessment of the relationship between the cost and the value of the service delivery outcomes achieved, and
3. any policies and procedures OEC developed to implement these provisions.

§ 3 — CARE 4 KIDS WAITING LIST PRIORITIZATION

The act changes the Care 4 Kids law regarding waiting list prioritization. Under prior law, the commissioner had to establish the waiting list based on the following prioritization:

1. Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) recipients, who are either employed or in employment activities (training or career-focused education) under the Department of Social Services' Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program (see BACKGROUND);
2. working families whose TFA was discontinued not more than five years before the date of the Care 4 Kids application;
3. teen parents;
4. low-income working families;
5. adoptive families of children adopted from the Department of Children and Families and who were granted an income standards waiver;
6. working families who are at risk of welfare dependency; and
7. any household with a child or children participating in the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership federal grant program for up to 12 months based on Early Head Start eligibility criteria.

In addition to the above list, the act requires the commissioner to use discretion in prioritizing the waiting list within and between existing priority groups, including (1) households with an infant or toddler and (2) children who are homeless, from very low income families, or who have special needs or are

part of a vulnerable population as defined by OEC (45 C.F.R. 98.46).

§ 8 — SCHOOL READINESS GRANT RATES

The act removes the fixed dollar amount of \$8,927 per child in the school readiness grant law for FY 19. Instead, for FY 20 and each following year, it allows the OEC commissioner to establish new rates, within available appropriations, for the school readiness program intended to improve program quality and access.

The review must examine the rates being used in school readiness child day care contracts. The commissioner may establish, within available appropriations, new rates based on the review results, provided the new rates are established to improve program quality and access.

§ 9 — UNEXPENDED SCHOOL READINESS GRANT FUNDS

Prior law authorized the commissioner to use unexpended school readiness grant funds only for, among other things, professional development for school readiness staff, assisting readiness programs in meeting accreditation requirements, developing and implementing strategies for children to transition from preschool to kindergarten, and other purposes.

The act additionally authorizes OEC to use such funds to (1) develop and implement strategies for children to transition to preschool and (2) assist transitions through parental engagement and whole-family supports through OEC's two generational initiative or other available resources.

BACKGROUND

TFA and JFES

Unless exempted by law, TFA recipients generally have to participate in JFES to remain eligible for TFA. TFA generally provides up to 21 months of cash assistance to needy families with children. JFES provides services and support to help adult caretakers secure permanent employment within the time the recipient is receiving TFA.